

Abstract:

My MOP skill project consisted of working with the monk seal program at the National Marine Fisheries Services at the Honolulu Laboratory. My project entailed cataloging, organizing and integrating their digital photo database with their sighting database. The digital photographs were already entered into the photo database which is a software program known as SuperJPEG. The sighting reports are entered and organized in another software database known as Microsoft Access. My job was to match up a specific digital photograph of a Hawaiian monk seal with its corresponding sighting report by observing and determining the identity of the seal. Determining the identity of the seal was done by observing the seals size and sex and other defining features such as identifying the tag numbers on the seal's back flippers (if present), natural bleach marks, unique scars and other distinctive physical characteristics. By determining the seal's identity and by being able match it up with the sighting report allows for the monk seal program researchers to be able to access the data more efficiently. Therefore when a specific seal's sighting report or photo needs to be retrieved they are both integrated together and organized onto the databases for easier access. My project resulted in being able to locate the sighting report of a Hawaiian monk seal with its appropriate photograph.

Marine Option Program Evaluation of Learning

What I gained/learned:

There are a number of things that I learned and gained through my MOP skill project with the National Marine Fisheries Services. The first feature that I was able to learn was in developing proper skills in proposal writing. Without any prior experience in proposal writing the MOP skill project taught me the appropriate steps and guidelines needed in order to construct an acceptable proposal paper. I also gained insight on what is involved in marine mammal research and the techniques needed in order to be a successful researcher. I was able to gain knowledge on how to access, use and manipulate databases that are used significantly in marine mammal research. It has given me the opportunity to experience what it is like to be in the marine mammal research field and it has shown me what I need to accomplish and experience in order to succeed in a marine mammal research related career.

What I learned about myself:

The most important asset that I learned about myself was that one of my career passions is to work with marine mammals. This experience has reinforced my love for marine mammals and in my passion of wanting to pursue a future career around them. I also learned that I highly enjoy working with people who have the same views and thoughts on marine mammal conservation. I've learned that working with people who are truly compassionate about making a difference through their personal efforts gives me the extra confidence to go ahead and pursue what I am passionate about. Although I prefer to not be trapped in an office analyzing and entering data and that I prefer to be out in the field, I have come to realize that with such extensive field work there is always a period of time where you are stuck at a computer entering information into databases. By realizing this it has opened my eyes to both aspects of research; both the active research part and the data entry aspect. Along with this I have also learned that I like having a first hand experience, instead of reading literature in a book or writing an extensive research paper; I learn so much better through hands on experience.

Acknowledgements:

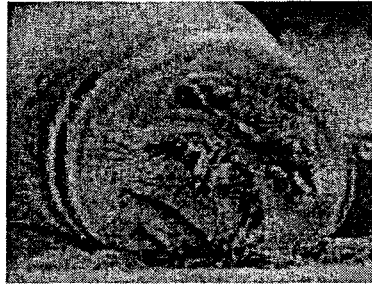
For my acknowledgements there are five people who truly gave me the opportunity to engage into this skill project. First Andi Schlucker did everything in her will power to try to hook me up with a MOP skill project that integrated photography and marine mammals. There couldn't have been a better MOP skill project then the one she set me up to do with the monk seal program at the National Marine Fishery Services. Along with Andi, the three women that I worked directly with in the monk seal office were Thea Johanos-Kam, Brenda Becker and Suzanne Canja. They were god sends! I could not have asked for a better group of people to work with. They were so willing to share information with me, to teach me new things, and to give me endless opportunities that I could use in the future even after I leave their office. I wanted to acknowledge their helpfulness and thoughtfulness throughout my whole MOP skill project. Without their willingness to educate me and to help me out I would not know half the information on the Hawaiian monk seal that I know now. They have also given me the confidence to never lose my interest in marine mammals and to pursue my career dreams without having any limitations. Lastly I would like to acknowledge Dr. Sherwood Maynard who gave me the opportunity to fulfill and complete this MOP skill project within one semester and with such short notice. Without his kindness and willingness to work with me, I wouldn't have been able to complete my skill project within this short time frame of four months.

Overall Summary:

This MOP skill project went exactly how I expected it to go, maybe even better than I expected. I was able to achieve all of my learning objectives and was able to gain perspective on marine mammal research. The only thing that I would have done different was actually going out and seeing a Hawaiian monk seal in the wild, instead of just seeing them through photographs on a computer screen! This skill project was an awesome opportunity for me that has given me both experience under my belt and insights on what I want and need to accomplish for my future career aspirations.

Marine Option Program Project Proposal

Hawaiian Monk Seal, *Monachus schauinslandi*, Distribution and Photo-Identification on the Main Hawaiian Islands



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